



MDCR/MCRC E-newsletter for June 26, 2015

[U.S. Supreme Court legalizes same-sex marriage](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/26

WASHINGTON – Delivering the gay rights movement a seminal victory in its march to equality, the U.S. Supreme Court this morning declared Michigan's ban on same-sex marriages unconstitutional, revoking it and others like it across the nation.

[SCOTUS ruling won't be the last word on gay rights](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/26

No matter what happens, the hard work remains.

[Gender identity drives Lansing ordinance review](#)

From the Lansing State Journal, 6/25

LANSING – When Diane White, formerly Dan White, wanted to transition two years ago from male to female, she knew there would be some emotional pain.

[All references to 'crippled children' removed from Michigan law](#)

From MLive, 6/25

LANSING – All references to "crippled children" will be removed from state law after Lt. Governor Brian Calley signed bills modernizing certain statutes Thursday.

[Same-sex Royal Oak couple fights for equal benefits](#)

From WDIV, 6/25

ROYAL OAK, Mich. -Stephanie Citron and Beth Gardiner of Royal Oak are legally married and raising a daughter.

[The Supreme Court Keeps the Fair Housing Law Effective](#)

From the New York Times, 6/25

Housing discrimination doesn't have to be intentional to be illegal. That is the point of the Supreme Court's ruling on Thursday interpreting the Fair Housing Act of 1968 in accord with clear congressional intent, and preserving a well-established and critical tool in the long-running battle to ensure a more integrated society.

[Realign your thinking to be a force against racism](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/25

When members of one group are interested in understanding the motivations or intentions of an "opposing" group, I am usually one of a few asked to go do intel.

[Even one hate crime is too many](#)

From MLive, 6/25

FLINT – Some MLive commenters have taken us to task for a story on hate crime statistics in Genesee County.

[Grand Rapids church and city leaders call for end to racism after Charleston shooting](#)

From MLive, 6/24

GRAND RAPIDS – Claps and cheers sounded from Rosa Parks Circle Wednesday as church and city leaders spoke about combating racism in the wake of a mass shooting last week at a South Carolina church.

[Charleston shooting: Confederate, Jim Crow symbols go beyond flag](#)

From MLive/the Associated Press, 6/24

ATLANTA — South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley called for removing the Confederate battle flag that flies in front of her state's Capitol. But she hasn't said the Confederate veterans' monument alongside the flag should go.

[Editor's Note: Happy 100th, Grace Lee Boggs](#)

From the Detroit News, 6/24

You don't have to agree with someone's political or social ideals to respect their passion and commitment.

[Racism's legacy is national, not regional](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/23

Nine people were killed last week in Charleston by a vile terrorist whose intentions were clear: to murder black Americans.

[Michigan awaits Supreme Court rulings](#)

From the Detroit News, 6/23

Washington — As the U.S. Supreme Court nears the end of its term, its highest profile cases are among the seven yet to be decided, including three whose impact could be felt widely across Michigan.

[Michigan's Braille and Talking Book Library brought home a national award from Library of Congress](#)

From MLive, 6/23

LANSING - Michigan's Braille and Talking Book Library has been awarded the 11th Annual Network Library of the Year Award from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

[Dearborn company's Ramadan commercial casts new light on Muslims](#)

From the Dearborn Press and Guide, 6/23

It isn't every day that you see positive images of Muslims on television. But this Ramadan, a new commercial is changing that.

[White Supremacists Without Borders](#)

From the New York Times, 6/22

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — A VARIETY of clues to the motives of Dylann Storm Roof, the suspect in last week's mass shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., have emerged. First, we saw the patches he wore on his jacket in a Facebook photo: the flags of regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia that brutally enforced white minority rule.

[Bill would ban questions, discrimination over contraceptive use](#)

From Bridge Magazine, 6/21

LANSING — Employers in Michigan would be barred from asking employees or job candidates about their use of contraceptives under legislation introduced by Senate Democrats.

[Defiant Show of Unity in Charleston Church That Lost 9 to Racist Violence](#)

From the New York Times, 6/21

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The Emanuel A.M.E. Church has survived antebellum laws barring black worship, an angry white mob that burned down its original edifice, and the execution of its founder and dozens of others planning a slave revolt.

[A welcoming environment is crucial for Michigan's economy](#)

From MLive, 6/21

Gov. Rick Snyder's recent signing of bills that allow faith-based adoption agencies to discriminate against gays and others who don't share their religious beliefs drew outrage from newspaper editorial pages.

[On Dolezal, Charleston and the limits of race and choice](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/20

Americans spent the first part of last week transfixed by Rachel Dolezal, the Spokane, Wash., NAACP chief who pretended she had African heritage, presumably to boost her credibility as a civil-rights leader.

[Michigan Political Points: Former Republican parks 'stop your discrimination' sign at state Capitol](#)

From MLive, 6/20

LANSING — Former state Rep. Lorence Wenke, who left the Republican Party over its opposition to gay marriage, returned to his old stomping grounds this week with a strongly-worded message for the GOP-led Legislature.

[Michigan discrimination monitor says she, too, is a victim](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/20

LANSING — At the Michigan Department of Transportation, Cheryl Hudson's job is to investigate employee complaints of workplace discrimination.

[Detroit pastors watchful after South Carolina shooting](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/19

The Rev. Nicholas Hood III was finishing a service just a couple of years ago at Plymouth United Church of Christ when a large man charged down the aisle and threw his weight against him.

[Day: End the myth of absent black fathers](#)

From the Detroit News, 6/19

As Father's Day approaches, it seems as good a time as any to ether an old myth in American political discourse.

[Wisconsin school district bans American Indian team logos](#)

From the Washington Post, 6/19

MADISON, Wis. — Sports fans may have to leave their Blackhawks, Indians or Redskins gear at home if they plan on entering a Madison public school next year.

[Rachel Dolezal proves race not fixed or objective fact](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/18

Of the 60 people who cofounded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909, only seven were, in fact, "colored." Most of the organization's founders were white, such as Mary White Ovington. Its highest honor, the Spingarn Medal, is named for Joel Spingarn, who was Jewish and white.

[Charleston shooting could be defining civil rights moment](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/18

I was headed to Twitter to extol the virtues of the Netflix show "Grace and Frankie" about two women whose husbands leave them for each other after 40 years of marriage. I was in a good mood.

[Henry Louis Gates: If Clementa Pinckney Had Lived](#)

From the New York Times, 6/18

I have no doubt that had the Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney lived, he would have become known — and celebrated — across our country for his leadership, rather than sealed immortally in tragedy, one more black martyr in a line stretching back to the more than 800 slave voyages that ended at Charleston Harbor.

Glenn: Schools Should Be Liable For Telling Kids It's OK To Be Gay

From Gongwer, 6/18

Rep. Gary Glenn said in a documentary released this month that schools should be held accountable for medical conditions - including cancer and sexually transmitted diseases - that gay students may be diagnosed with after school officials tell them it is "okay to be gay."

The documentary, "Light Wins: How To Overcome The Criminalization Of Christianity," comes from Faith 2 Action, a Ohio-based group led by conservative activist Janet Porter. Currently, with the U.S. Supreme Court preparing to release its decision on same-sex marriage, the group is offering the 30-minute version of the film free to churches willing to air it during June.

"When young people rely on what they hear at school and put themselves at severe medical risk by engaging in homosexual behavior - whether it's HIV/AIDS, cancer, hepatitis, or STDs or, according to one medical journal, premature death by 20 years - when a young person at school hears 'it's okay to be gay' and then comes down with a fatal disease as a result, school officials should be held liable. Individually and in their official capacities. Financially and maybe even criminally," Mr. Glenn (R-Midland) said in the film.

Mr. Glenn co-authored the state's same-sex marriage ban and is president of American Family Association of Michigan, a conservative group opposed to same-sex marriage.

While in the House during the last six months, Mr. Glenn has not publicly focused on the issue of same-sex marriage, but he did come under fire for issuing an "agenda alert" for a Midland Daily News reporter who was promoted and happened to be gay. Mr. Glenn later apologized (See Gongwer Michigan Report, April 6, 2015).

House Speaker Kevin Cotter (R-Mount Pleasant) had not yet seen the comments Thursday evening, his spokesperson Gideon D'Assandro said.

Mr. Cotter did on Thursday appoint Mr. Glenn to represent the state on the National Conference of State Legislatures' 2015-16 natural resources and infrastructure committee.

Senate Unanimously Passed Service Dog Bills

From MIRS, 6/18

The Senate unanimously passed its pair of bills today that protect Michigan military veterans who use service dogs to better manage the effect of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

The bills also exempt licensing fees for veterans' service dogs. Sen. David KNEZEK (D-Dearborn Heights) and Sen. Margaret O'BRIEN sponsored the bills in the Senate.

"Many of our veterans are coming home with invisible wounds they sustained on the battlefield and a service dog can play a critical role in their ability to reintegrate and thrive in society," Knezek said.

[Religious objection law on same-sex adoptions protects freedom](#)

From MLive, 6/17

Anyone paying attention to current events has no doubt heard about the new laws, signed by Gov. Rick Snyder, related to the protection of religious freedom when it comes to adoptions. Predictably, news outlets and activist groups have used hyperbole and wildly exaggerated claims to express displeasure with the laws.

[School pays former student \\$600K for sex assault, harassment claims](#)

From MLive, 6/17

GRAND RAPIDS – A former Forest Hills Central student settled her federal lawsuit against the district for \$600,000 over its response to allegations she was sexually assaulted on campus.

['Treasure' looks at life of Detroit transgender woman](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/17

In the film "Treasure," Brandie Brown describes seeing her sibling, Shelly, as a transgender woman. "She had a little black short hairstyle. She was dressed all in black. Nails long. She was looking good," says Brown, smiling at the memory.

[Metro Detroiters help out, reflect, fast for Ramadan](#)

From the Detroit News, 6/17

A day before the holy month of Ramadan begins, Nabintou Doumbia worked at what she and other Muslims across Metro Detroit often pursue throughout their most sacred time: helping out.

[Community wants logo off EMU band uniforms](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/17

The gift was simple, but the message was clear.

During the public comment at today's Eastern Michigan University Board of Regents meeting, members of the Native American community at Eastern presented President Susan Martin with a seam ripper and a message — use it to take "hidden" Huron logos off marching band uniforms at the school.

[Muslim woman sues over headscarf removal during arrest](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/16

A Muslim woman from Dearborn Heights is suing the Oceana County Sheriff's Department for violating her Constitutional rights after she says she was forced to remove a religious head covering while being processed at the county jail last month for a traffic violation.

[Planet Fitness among local LGBT group's 'pride award' recipients](#)

From MLive, 6/15

SAGINAW - A support group for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals in the communities of Saginaw, Midland and Bay City has announced the recipients of its annual LGBT Pride Awards, which will be presented at the group's upcoming banquet.

[Documentary on Judge Damon J. Keith to debut in Detroit](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/14

When Jesse Nesser picked up a biography of Damon J. Keith two years ago, it was only to flip through the pages.

[Susan J. Demas: Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder is hailed as a 'moderate', but he signed anti-gay bills anyway](#)

From MLive, 6/14

It's about the adults, not the children.

[The Same-Sex Marriage Decision: What's at Stake for Couples](#)

From the New York Times, 6/14

If the Supreme Court legalizes same-sex marriage nationwide, married gay couples will gain all the financial and legal rights and responsibilities of being married, regardless of which state they call home.

[Same-Sex Parents' Rights May Be Unresolved After Justices' Ruling](#)

From the New York Times, 6/14

When Jessica and Melissa Tinchler take the four-hour road trip from their home in Lexington, Ohio, to visit relatives in Indiana, it is a two-vehicle affair: They need car seats for each of their four children — a 4-year-old, a 3-year-old and 2-year-old twins — along with Pack 'n Plays, high chairs, diapers and enough toys to keep everyone entertained. And then there are the two dogs, who together weigh 165 pounds.

[Transgender Community in Crisis](#)

From Dome Magazine, 6/12

The transgender community is in crisis. In the first three and a half months of 2015, nine[1] young transgender people have committed suicide, at least seven[2] transgender women have been viciously murdered — and these are just those we know about since many transgender people are misgendered by family, law enforcement, and the media. Transgender people are four times more likely to live in dire poverty,[3] and are twice as likely to be unemployed[4] than their cisgender counterparts. Over one in five transgender people will experience homelessness in their lifetime, and one in ten transgender people have been evicted because of their gender identity.[5] Package all of this with the increasingly hateful and dehumanizing rhetoric about transgender lives and bodies slipping into our politics and the media, and it's no wonder there is demoralization and despair in the transgender community.

[National Register taps Detroit church where giants spoke](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/12

A Baptist church in Detroit with a storied history of civil rights activism has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, state officials said Friday.

Snyder Appoints Middle-Eastern American Affairs Commission

From Gongwer, 6/12

Governor Rick Snyder appointed the first members Friday to the new Middle-Eastern American Affairs Commission some two years after his first attempt at a body to represent those of Arab and Chaldean descent in the state.

"The Middle Eastern American community plays an integral role in our state, and this commission will help ensure Michiganders from diverse backgrounds have the best opportunities to actively work together," Mr. Snyder said on naming the first 15 members.

The new commission was created in February (EO 2015-6) to replace the Council on Arab and Chaldean American Affairs, which he had created in June 2013 but then never filled.

On the new commission, Dave Abdallah of Dearborn Heights, Susan Dabaja of Dearborn, Helen Habib of Farmington Hills, Sharif Hussein of Grand Ledge and Paul Sophiea of Dearborn will serve terms expiring April 19, 2017. Wendy Acho of West Bloomfield, Mariam Bazzi of Dearborn, Michael Romaya of West Bloomfield, Manal Saab of Fenton and Suzanne Sukkar of Ypsilanti will serve terms expiring April 19, 2018. Bishr Al-Ujayli of Rochester Hills, Fey Beydoun of Dearborn, Haifa Fakhouri of Troy, Lina Harajli of Dearborn and Abe Munfakh of Plymouth will serve terms expiring April 19, 2019.

The appointments are not subject to Senate advice and consent and regular commission terms will be four years.

[Beckmann: These are tough times to be a cop](#)

From the Detroit News, 6/12

Being a cop is one of the most noble and important professions in America.

[ACLU of Michigan vows lawsuit against 'discriminatory' religious objection adoption law](#)

From MLive, 6/12

Gov. Rick Snyder took less than 24 hours to sign controversial religious objection adoption legislation this week, and the ACLU of Michigan took even less time to vow a legal challenge to the new law.

[Anti-gay auto shop supporters, protestors spar at 'God and Country' talk](#)

From MLive, 6/12

JENISON – The "God and Country" forum hosted Thursday by an anti-gay auto shop owner was marred by frequent clashes between his controversial guests and vocal protestors.

[Lawsuit: Fishbone's mistakes woman for man, ejects her](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/11

A woman who says she was mistaken for a man while trying to use the women's restroom at Fishbone's Rhythm Kitchen Cafe in January has filed a lawsuit against the Detroit eatery, claiming she was injured when a security officer physically ejected her from the restaurant.

[New Michigan law on gay adoption draws mixed reaction](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/11

Brad O'Conner, 27, of Pittsfield Township and his husband, 22-year-old Nathan Furey, hope one day to adopt a child.

[Michigan senator backs bill to require school districts to adopt anti-bullying policies](#)

From MLive, 6/11

LANSING – A federal bill co-sponsored by Sen. Gary Peters could require all schools and districts that receive funding from the federal government to pass policies prohibiting bullying and harassment.

House Leadership Refers LGBT Pride Month Resolution To Committee

From MIRS, 6/10

House leadership sent a resolution that would highlight June as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month to committee today instead of giving it immediate approval, like what occurs with many resolutions.

The resolution is HR 101, sponsored by Rep. Jon HOADLEY (D-Kalamazoo), one of the chamber's two openly gay members.

"Resolved by the House of Representatives, that the members of this legislative body declare June 2015 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month in the state of Michigan," the proposal reads. It continues, "We pledge to continue our efforts in creating and maintaining a state that provides equal opportunity, fair treatment, and human dignity for all people."

After giving immediate approval to resolutions on Ramadan and Dairy Foods Awareness Day, House GOP leadership sent HR 101 to the Families, Children and Seniors Committee.

Gideon D'ASSANDRO, spokesperson for Speaker Kevin COTTER (R-Mt. Pleasant), said leadership has been trying to send resolutions that contain "statements of fact" to committees instead of immediately gaveling them through.

Such statements of fact could require some additional research to make sure the statements are accurate.

Asked if the House had approved other resolutions that include similar statements of fact, D'Assandro admitted there's some gray area in determining what is a statement of fact and what isn't.

"It's a judgment call," he said.

Hoadley noted that his resolution was sent to committee on the same day the Legislature put the final touches on bills that would allow faith-based adoption agencies to recuse themselves from adoptions conflicting with "sincerely held religious beliefs."

Hoadley said those bills allow agencies to pick and choose whom they want to serve.

"We couldn't even do a resolution," Hoadley said. "Come on."

LGBT pride events are about bringing visibility to LGBT families, he said.

Hoadley's resolution had 43 co-sponsors, including three Republicans.

They were Reps. Al PSCHOLKA (R-Stevensville), Kathy CRAWFORD (R-Nov) and Mike CALLTON (R-Nashville).

Earlier this session, Pscholka received backlash over a comment he made on the House floor that some perceived as anti-gay (See "Pscholka Apologizes After Calling Calif. 'Land Of Fruits And Nuts,'" 3/11/15).

Pscholka said he's maintained a good relationship with the LGBT community in his district.

After his "ill-advised comments," he had a meeting with LGBT groups in his district, he said, adding he was proud to support Hoadley's resolution.

[Protest planned to counter anti-gay auto shop owner's 'God and Country' talk](#)

From MLive, 6/10

JENISON – When an anti-gay auto shop owner hosts a "God and Country" talk Thursday at the Jenison Center for the Arts, there could be up to 200 protestors outside spreading a message of tolerance and love.

[Man files lawsuit claiming Oakland Co. Sheriff's deputies, Sheriff and county violated civil rights](#)

From WXYZ, 6/10

The 7 Investigators have obtained a 13-page lawsuit, claiming civil rights violations against two Oakland County sheriff's deputies, Sheriff Michael Bouchard and the county.

[The poor often pay for police misconduct with their pocketbooks](#)

From the Oakland Press, 6/9

Floyd Dent, a black man from Inkster, Michigan, was pulled over for a routine traffic stop in January when a white Inkster police officer dragged Dent out of his vehicle, put him in an apparent choke-hold, punched him repeatedly in the head and used a stun gun on him.

[Detroit teacher fired for using broom to end fight sues](#)

From the Detroit News, 6/9

A Pershing High School teacher who was dismissed after wielding a broom to separate two students fighting is suing the district.

[In paychecks, Michigan women have a long way to go, baby](#)

From Bridge Magazine, 6/9

Ann Arbor resident Sue Dean is a notable exception to the rule in Michigan.

[Professor files lawsuit against university for discrimination related to medical leave](#)

From CMU Life, 6/8

Journalism faculty member Sara Kubik filed a federal lawsuit June 5 in U.S. District Court against Central Michigan University and several staff members for sex discrimination, pregnancy discrimination and retaliation.

[Ypsilanti school board asks trustee to resign after controversial Facebook comments](#)

From MLive, 6/5

The Ypsilanti Community Schools Board of Education has asked a board member who made apparently sarcastic but racially-charged comments to step down from her position.

[ACCESS seeks Civil Rights Commission's support of 'Take on Hate' campaign](#)

From The Arab American News, 6/4

DEARBORN – Violent hate crimes and hate and bias against Arab and Muslim Americans is at an all-time high, Rana Abbas, director of communications for ACCESS, the country's largest Arab American Non-Profit Organization, told the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

[Hurons logo, harassment prompt meeting at EMU](#)

From the Detroit News, 6/4

U.S. Justice Department officials came to Eastern Michigan University this week to meet with president Susan Martin and a Native American campus group to discuss concerns over the continued use of the school's Hurons logo after students allegedly harassed a Native American elder in April.

[Being gay 'not a civil right,' says Michigan billboard with rainbow face](#)

From MLive, 6/4

WYOMING, MI – A billboard along U.S. 131 near Grand Rapids is fueling the ongoing debate over same-sex marriage by stating that "homosexuality is a behavior, not a civil right."

[Ann Arbor defending its right to adopt living wage, non-discrimination ordinances](#)

From MLive, 6/3

The Ann Arbor City Council went on record this week opposing a move by some state lawmakers to strip local governments of certain powers, including the ability to adopt living wage and non-discrimination ordinances.

[New ACLU app will allow for easy filming of police](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/3

The ACLU of Michigan is announcing a new mobile app that will allow residents to film police encounters on their phone, and send them to the ACLU moments after the recording is over.

[Hispanic immigrants playing more critical role in Michigan's farm economy](#)

From MLive/Bridge Magazine 6/2

When nearly 200 unaccompanied children from Central America were brought to Michigan for settlement last summer, angry protests greeted their arrival. Protesters voiced concerns about disease and gang violence, with some worrying that the newcomers would one day take employment away from job-seeking Americans.

[One year later, undocumented immigrant children quietly settling in Michigan](#)

From MLive/Bridge Magazine, 6/2

When Elvis Velasquez's grandmother paid a network of "coyote" smugglers to transport the 13-year-old boy to the United States from his native Honduras, neither had any idea that he would travel as far as Michigan.

[Judge reinstates Portage Central tennis player who claims she was bullied](#)

From MLive, 6/2

PORTAGE – A Portage Central High School tennis player was bullied by her teammates and made the subject of rumors that led coaches and school officials to search her belongings for drugs and alcohol and give her a preliminary breathalyzer test before a match, according to a lawsuit filed in Kalamazoo County Circuit Court.

[Bill would prevent local governments from creating employment policies in their area](#)

From the MSU State News, 6/2

A bill currently working its way through the state Legislature would prohibit local units of government from establishing ordinances, resolutions or policies; attempting to control certain employment-related matters.

[Grosse Pointe Woods students attacked with pellet gun because of race](#)

From WDIV, 6/2

Grosse Pointe Woods – “We walked past this one house and these men, they like, shot a pellet gun from the top story of the house,” said 17-year-old Indya Davis.

[Detroit Muslims applaud high court's Abercrombie ruling](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/2

Religious minorities in metro Detroit cheered the U.S. Supreme Court's decision today in favor of a Muslim woman wearing an Islamic headscarf who did not get hired after she showed up to a job interview with clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch.

[Police chief's viewpoint is an antidote to distrust](#)

From the Detroit Free Press, 6/1

This story is not new.

Panel: Dealing With Race Inequity Could Help Build The Economy

From Gongwer, 5/29

MACKINAC ISLAND - Taking steps to end racial inequities could build the state economy, as well as deal with chronic issues like crime and educational problems, a panel said on the final day of the 2015 Detroit Regional Chamber Mackinac Conference.

With incidents of racial tension across the U.S. in the past year - many of those involving police encounters with young African American men - the conference featured several discussions on questions of race.

Among those questions was a release of a report by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation on racial inequities in Michigan, finding, among other things, that based on family income and education levels, 70 percent of minority infants and toddlers are at risk for poor outcomes compared to 48 percent of young white children.

The study also found that Detroit is the most segregated community between blacks and whites, while Grand Rapids is in the top third of most segregated communities in the nation. It also said that in the Detroit area, 90 percent of blacks live in "opportunity-poor neighborhoods."

But La June Montgomery Tabron, president of the Kellogg Foundation, said there is a definite business case to be made towards ending racial inequities.

If the wage gap that exists between minorities and whites was erased, that alone could add more than \$30 billion to Michigan's gross domestic product.

It could also have produced another \$900 million in tax revenues in Detroit, she said, which may have been enough to prevent the city from having to go into bankruptcy in 2013.

Frank Venegas Jr., CEO of the Ideal Group, a business which operates in southwest Detroit, said businesses can make a lot of money by investing in the city and working with local residents by providing jobs and training.

Detroit City Council member Andrew Spivey said as the economy improves in the state and in Detroit, that will lead much of the solution to racial issues.

But panel members said practices such as communication are key to building successful enterprises in traditionally underserved areas.

Mr. Venegas said, for example, that early in the firm's life he held meetings with the leaders of four gangs in the area. From them, he learned that the issue of most concern was jobs. The company has hired many former gang members and one now runs an operation for the Ideal Group in Florida.

Renee Hall, deputy Detroit police chief, said the city and its police are now involved in major efforts to build neighborhood policing and improve communications to reduce crime and limit the possibility of reaction to police incidents.